

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
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Joint Northern Radio Transmission of Church Service from Sweden.

On Sunday May 4th, the second joint Northern church service was broadcast over all the Northern radio stations. The service was transmitted from Visby Cathedral in Sweden where Bishop Algot Anderberg preached. The service was of a special character as this Sunday was celebrated as Reformation Sunday in the Swedish ecclesiastical year. Before the service began the representatives of the various Northern countries told their listeners about Visby Cathedral and explained the special nature of the Swedish order of service.

The first joint Northern radio service was broadcast last autumn from the Cathedral of Trondheim, Norway, at which service Bishop Arne Fjellbu preached and, according to the plan, there will be yet another service from Denmark and one from Finland during the coming year. These joint Northern church services have been greatly appreciated by listeners in all 4 countries as a proof of the religious fellowship in the Northern countries.

Northern Christian Conferences.

A number of religious organizations and groups are planning to meet for joint Northern conferences this summer. Thus the "Church Movement" (the organizations working for the erection of more churches, especially in the big cities) will meet in Stockholm from June 2nd - 5th. Amongst other things, the relationship will be discussed between the Church Movement and the special situation of the Church in the Northern countries which all have National churches, as well as the functions and equipment of the interior of a church. In connection with the conference there will be an exhibition of models and drawings for new churches to be erected.

The Northern associations of teachers of religion will meet at Sigtuna, Sweden, from July 23rd - 27th. These meetings take place every fifth year and this year the main subject will be "The Child and the Message". Both speakers and members at the conference will belong to different denominations.

At the newly established Northern-European folk high school at Snoghøj which began its opening course on May 1st the so-called Göteborg (Gothenburg)-Movement will conduct a conference from August 4th - 10th at which a number of topical subjects will be dealt with under the main heading of "The Northern Countries and Europe". The

speakers will be professors, clergymen, authors, and people from the folk high schools. The Göteborg-Movement is a Northern movement in close connection with the folk high school movement as inspired by the Danish bishop Grundtvig.

Scandinavian-German Church Conference in East Germany.

From May 6th - 9th the Scandinavian-German Church Convention held a conference in Ludwigslust, East Germany on the main theme "A living congregation in a changed world". 15 ministers and laymen from Denmark, Norway and Sweden took part in the conference, and the corresponding number of representatives of the East German churches. The programme of each conference day contained Bible study and addresses and discussions on historical, theological and practical church questions related to the life and tasks of the Christian congregation.

DENMARK

Baptists Protest Against 'Religious Discrimination'.

Only teachers belonging to the Evangelical-Lutheran National Church are allowed to teach religion in the Danish elementary schools in as much as the Christian instruction is to be in accordance with the Evangelical-Lutheran Confession. This provision in the present Education Act is described by the editor of the 'Baptist Weekly' as religious discrimination in contradiction to the basic principles of democracy. The editor feels that all teachers, irrespective of denomination, should be entitled to teach religion. The aim of the school should be, not to give a confessionally determined instruction, but to give an allround information about all the different conceptions of the gospel and that 'a one-sided instruction in Christianity is just as wrong as any kind of political regimentation or regimentation in any other school subject'.

To this 'Kristeligt Dagblad' in a leading article replies that 95% of the children in the schools come from homes which more or less actively - but at least formally - belong to the Danish Lutheran National Church and that it must, therefore, be quite natural that the Christian instruction is of an Evangelical-Lutheran character, with all due respect for the convictions of otherwise believing earnest Christians. Parents who do not wish their children to take part in the teaching are entitled to have them exempted from it. And although it may seem unreasonable that teachers who are formal members of the Lutheran National Church, but have no personal religious convictions, may teach religion while, for instance, earnestly believing Baptists may not, the consequences would be quite impossible to foresee if all teachers, regardless of denominational membership, were entitled to act as instructors in Christianity. As a main point of argument 'Kristeligt Dagblad' refers to the provision that 'the elementary school takes over the responsibility for the Christian education of its pupils who were baptized as infants'.

As mentioned in CN No. 33 Baptist circles have approached the Minister of Education Jørgen Jørgensen in order to have the provisions concerning religious instruction in the present Education Act amended. But according to a later article by Editor Nørgård the majority of the

Parliamentary Committee working on the formulation of a new Education Act still maintains that religious instruction in the elementary school must, also in the future, be entrusted only to members of the Lutheran National Church. The Editor, therefore, appeals to the Danish press to 'help in preventing the continuation of the religious discrimination in our country!.

Two Danish Churchmen Refused Visas to East Germany.

Bishop Halfdan Høgsbro, Nykøbing, and Rev. Svend Lerfeldt, Copenhagen, were to have attended the festivities in Pomerania (East Germany) at the end of this month on the occasion of the 400 years' anniversary of the death of the Lutheran reformer Bugenhagen, but have been refused visas. The Bishop should have preached in Stralsund and Dr. Lerfeldt in Greifswald where he should also have delivered some lectures at the General Convocation.

The two Danish churchmen were granted visas last year in order to take part in the Scandinavian-German Church Conference in Züssow, East Germany.

New Bishop Appointed.

The present minister in Kerteminde, Rev. K.C. Holm, has been appointed Bishop of Odense in succession to Bishop Hans Øllgaard who retired recently on account of age. Being 43 years of age, the new bishop is the youngest of the Danish bishops.

International Christian Film Conference in Copenhagen.

An international Christian film conference, arranged by the organization 'Interfilm', took place in Copenhagen from May 13th-15th. The conference opened in the Danish Parliamentary building, Christiansborg, and the Danish Minister of Church Affairs, amongst others, spoke at the occasion. Several other prominent Christian film experts addressed the conference, among them the President of 'Interfilm', Rev. Tienda, Paris; Arthur Rank's close assistant, Mr. Evans, London; and Rev. Werner Hess, Frankfurt.

Landowner Leaves Property to the Church.

Denmark now possesses its first 'diocesan centre'. In his testament the 91 years old landowner, Frederik Lausen, has bequeathed the main building of his estate, Clasonsborg, to the Church. It is to be a self-supporting institution called 'The Clasonsborg Diocesan Estate for the Diocese of Viborg' under the management of a Committee which will include Bishop Chr. Baun, Viborg. The plan is to use the building as a congregational school for Jutland during the winter and in the summer to accommodate various courses at which people from the church and from business life may meet. The estate is made over unencumbered, but the Committee must find the means for the running of the institution.

Most of the dioceses in Sweden own such diocesan work centres and several Danish dioceses have expressed their wish to have such diocesan centres also.

FINLAND

Two Diocesan Meetings Go In For Women Pastors.

The greatest surprise at the diocesan meetings last month in preparation of the Church Convocation in October was no doubt that the majority at two of these meetings approved of women pastors. In Porvoo (Borgå) a motion was passed to this effect with 27 votes against 19, although it was added that the question demanded further clarification. In Tampere (Tammerfors) the majority likewise went in for women pastors with the reservation that there must be a male pastor in each parish so that the question of women pastors would only arise in congregations where there are several clergymen employed. The diocesan meetings in Turku (Åbo), Kuopio, Mikkeli (St. Michel) and Lapua (Lappo) approved in principle of the proposal mentioned in CN No. 27 for the establishment of a special office for women divinity graduates which should not, however, entitle them to administer the sacraments except in special cases. The diocesan meeting in Oulu (Uleåborg) emphasized that such an office should not involve ordination.

Of other matters to be discussed at the Church Convocation in the autumn the question of re-marriage of divorced persons in particular has attracted public attention. Until now all clergymen in the Lutheran National Church have been obliged to marry divorcees, but at the diocesan meetings in Turku (Åbo), Tampere (Tammerfors) and Porvoo (Borgå) a majority was in favour of leaving the decision in each case to the discretion of the clergymen in question. The meetings in Kuopio, Mikkeli (St. Michel) and Lapua (Lappo) moved that a special ritual should be employed at the re-marriage of divorcees, but that clergymen should continue to be obliged to officiate at all marriages without any exceptions.

The resolution for the revision of the Church Act was approved with certain amendments in three dioceses while the opinion in the other dioceses was that a more thorough working up of the proposal was necessary.

The proposal for a new church service book was approved with a few amendments in only one diocese. In all the other dioceses more extensive changes were desired. The proposal for a new text-book (containing scripture passages to be used at church services), on the other hand, generally had a good reception at the diocesan meetings.

At the diocesan meeting in Kuopio Bishop Eino Sormunen said: "Nothing is more erroneous than to adapt the course of the Church to the voices of the time, the voices of hate or popularity. The Church must watch closely for the signs of the time, but her only possible way for renewal must be from the inner life of the Church. The nature and duty of the Church must always be quite clear. Some time ago the predominant opinion was that the Church is an association, a kind of institution. But the Church is not established by humans. She is from above. Within the Church a deeper understanding of the nature and importance of the Bible, of the Creed, and of the ecclesiastical office has recently made itself felt."

First Church in Porkkala Re-Dedicated.

In the presence of a distinguished gathering, headed by the Finnish President Kekkonen, the church in Degerby was re-dedicated on the last Sunday in April as the first of the two churches in the Porkkala district which was returned to Finland in 1956 by the Soviet Union. The re-dedication ceremony was led by Bishop G.O. Rosengqvist who in his address described the return of Porkkala as a gift from God, and he expressed the hope that the re-dedication of the church would encourage more families to return to their home villages and the strenuous work of the rehabilitation of the district.

In connection with the re-dedication various gifts to the church from Denmark and Sweden were handed over and the Bishop expressed his sincere gratitude for the great help received by the Finnish Church from the rest of the Northern countries for the religious rehabilitation of Porkkala.

The restauration of the church in Degerby has cost 10 million Finnish marks, half of which was paid by the Central Church Fund. The other church in the Porkkala district, Kyrkslätt church, was much more damaged and it will probably be another year before its restauration is completed. This work is estimated to amount to altogether 40 million Finnish marks. The Swedish aid to the restauration of the churches amounts to 6-7 mill. marks.

NORWAY

The Norwegian National Church Up In Arms Against the Education Bill.

The Norwegian Government's proposed Education Bill which will weaken the present strong connection between Church and School at essential points (see CN No. 37) has caused a storm of protests from the Lutheran National Church.

Greatest attention is centred around a unanimous statement by the Norwegian Bishops addressed to the Parliamentary Church and Education Committee. In this statement the Bishops oppose the proposal's "tendency to separate the School from the Church and to weaken the religious and confessional character of the religious instruction". It is especially emphasized that the Section defining the aim and basis for the instruction in Christianity has been omitted. The Bishops do not acknowledge the official reason for this omission, viz. that the Pensa and basis for the other school subjects are not given in the Bill, either. The instruction in Christianity occupies an exceptional position, the Bishops maintain, in as much as it should not only give information about religion, but "provide the Christian instruction to which the Church and the parents have committed themselves at the baptism of the infant". The Bishops refer to Section Two in the Norwegian Constitution which makes it a duty for parents adhering to the Evangelical-Lutheran faith of the country to bring up their children in this faith. And even if the aim and Pensa of the religious instruction should be satisfactorily formulated in the new standard curriculum it will not lend the same importance and guarantee to the subject as a formulation in the Act itself. The Bishops, therefore, earnestly advocate that the present wording is retained in the new Act.

Also at other points where the new Bill tries to weaken the connection between School and Church the Bishops advocate that the present provisions are retained.

In a statement to 'Arbejderbladet' the Minister of Church Affairs and Education, Bergersen, points out that the Bill is not meant as an attack on the Christian instruction, but only as a "technical simplification" of the present Education Act; but in answer to this the Oslo daily 'Morgenbladet', for one, emphasized that the general impression of the new Bill is disconcerting. "The Church will lose her influence on the School which is in contravention of both the Constitution and tradition", the paper writes.

The leader of the Institute for Christian Upbringing in a statement to 'Morgenbladet' says that the Bill constitutes "the most serious infringement and the most fatal legislative change ever proposed in connection with the relationship between Church and School" and that in his opinion it is all an intentional and determined continuation of the school policy adopted by the Government during the last few years. In the publication of the Institute he calls to arms, both orally and in writing, against the Bill.

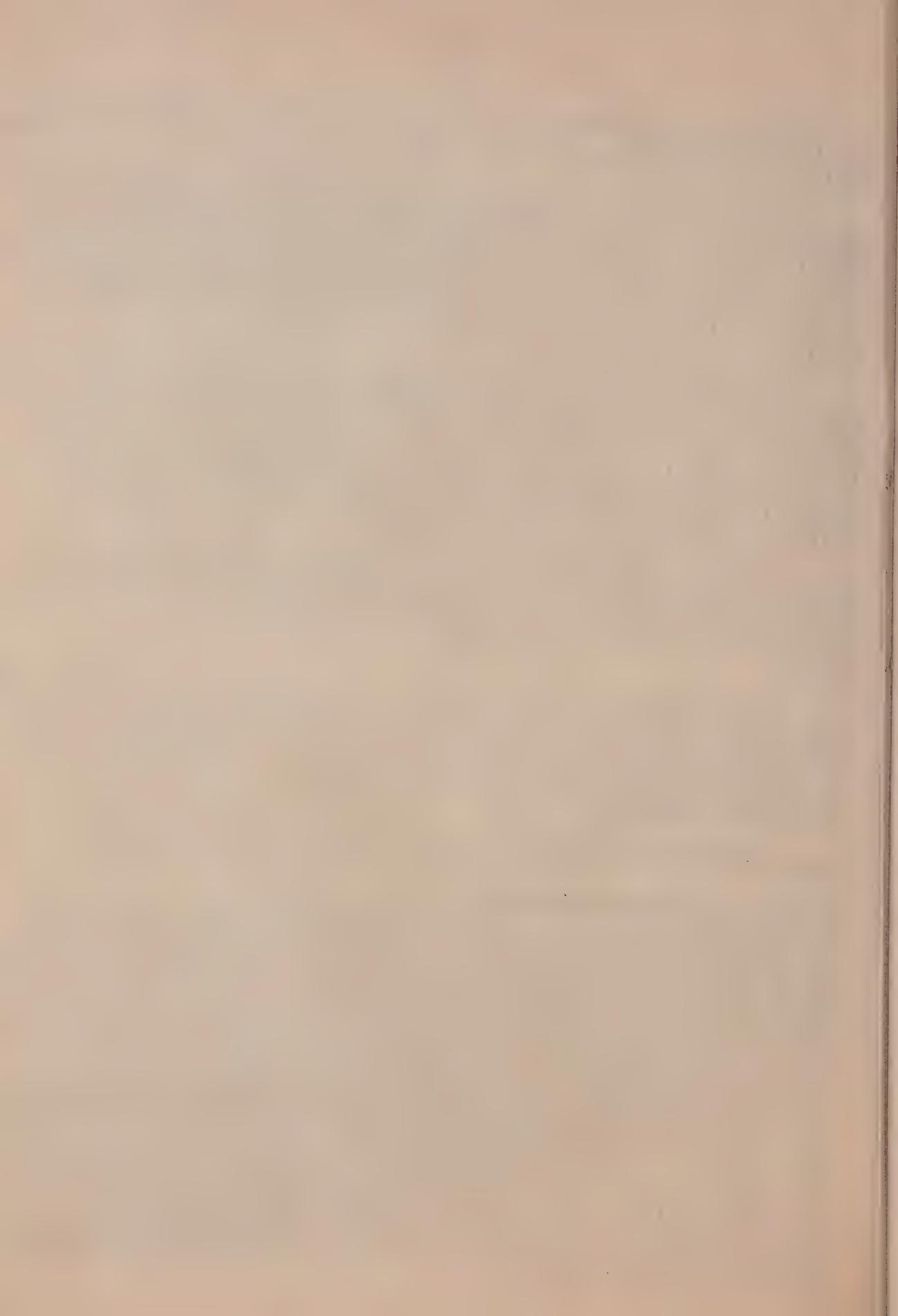
A number of organizations and groups belonging to the Lutheran National Church have protested against the provisions of the Bill; among others, the Home Mission Society, the divinity students at the University of Oslo, The Brotherhood of Clergymen who are faithful to the confession and Norway's Christian Student and High School Students' Union.

In a statement to the press Bishop Ragnvald Indrebø, Bergen, says that if the Education Bill should be carried in its proposed form the consequence must be that the Church must take up its own instruction in Christianity of those baptized as infants and that children may not be baptized without a definite promise from the parents to let them attend the "baptismal schools" of the Church.

A public meeting about the question in Trondheim had drawn a large audience and several more such meetings may be expected.

Two New Big Christian-Social Buildings in Oslo.

Last month the new 'social building' of the Oslo Home Mission was opened as an expression of the efforts for finding new ways in the re-socializing of alcoholics, discharged prisoners, drug addicts and others in particularly difficult circumstances. It is especially emphasized that the Institution is to be a 'protected' and at the same time an open work centre and that endeavours will be made to create "a miniature society" as a transitory stage where "faith and charity, spirit and labour will work together so that people may be helped to find their place once more in the social system", as it says in an article on the Institution in the weekly 'Vår Kirke'. A special training section will help people to get back to their usual working capacity and to a determination to live in a normal working environment. The training section is a sub-section of a proper factory and piece-work rates will be paid for the work done. There is a policlinic and an infirmary for psychiatric and psychological treatment connected with the Institution as well as sections for hobby activities and other spare time occupation. The building, finally, also includes a



small church hall. Everything is arranged along completely modern lines and, amongst other things, the work is based on the experiences gathered in similar institutions in other countries.

The Salvation Army in Norway has drawn up plans for a 'house of digs' in Oslo with accommodation for 175 people. It is intended for people who have nowhere to live, but have work and are able to pay rent, though with no possibilities of establishing a home for themselves. The building will cost 3 million Norwegian Crowns and the authorities are expected to give most of the sum.

SWEDEN

New Investigation Into the Opinion of Clergymen with Regard to Women Pastors.

The Swedish Clergymen's Association has decided to carry out a new investigation among its members during the summer with regard to the question of women pastors. The result of a similar investigation last year was that 83% of the clergymen were against giving women access to take holy orders.

The question of women pastors has been thoroughly discussed by clergymen and laymen at two conferences last month, viz. one at Sigtuna to which the Student Christian Movement and the Sigtuna Foundation had invited, and one in Linköping to which the Study Association of the Church had invited representatives from all the dioceses for discussion.

Theological Institute in Stockholm in the Autumn?

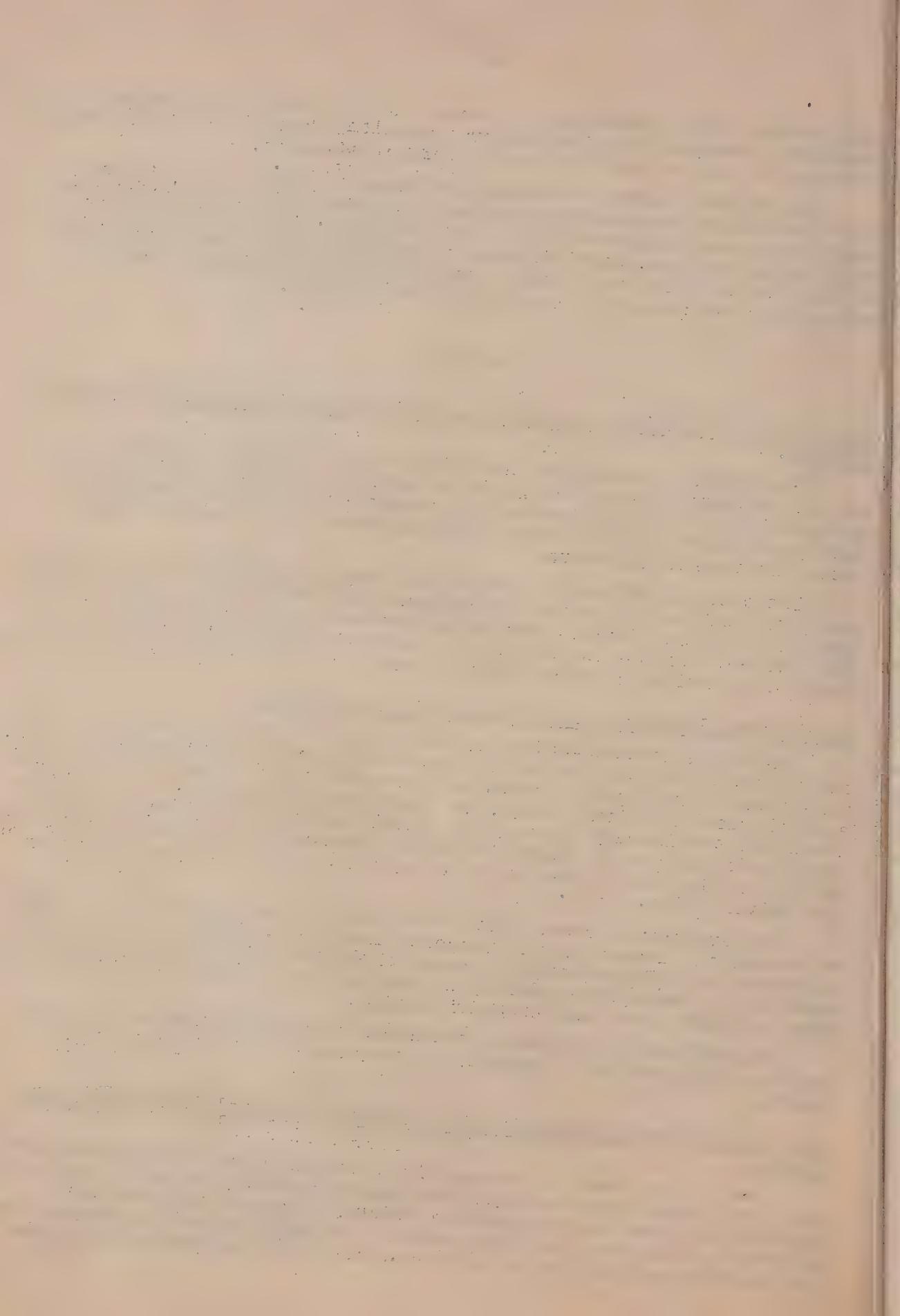
From this autumn Sweden may have a new theological study centre in Stockholm in addition to the two theological faculties at the Universities in Lund and Uppsala. However, the plan is only to establish a theological institute which may carry the undergraduates as far as the first preliminary part of the final divinity examination which would entitle them to teach Christian knowledge in the upper standards of the unified school system or to continue their studies at one of the Universities.

The suggestion comes from Gösta Hök, lecturer, and he is expected to become the leader of the proposed institute. Professors and other lecturers at Uppsala would be responsible for part of the instruction which would take place chiefly in the evening as some of the students have ordinary jobs beside their studies.

Bishop Helge Ljungberg, Stockholm, warmly recommends the plan and the institute will probably be accommodated in a congregation house.

Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen Between National Church and Free Church.

One of the local sections of the Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen (the Evangelical National Missionary Society) recently protested against the free church tendency which has become more and more apparent during the last few years. In an address to the Mission Board the mission association in Byske has protested against some of the



preachers of the movement administering both baptism and the eucharist and against their making use of the right of the Free Churches to officiate at weddings and funerals.

Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen began as a typical laymen's movement within the boundaries of the Lutheran National Church, but with independent policy and organization. During latter years, however, it has become more and more common that its preachers have administered the sacraments and, moreover, the Society has applied to the authorities on behalf of its preachers for the right, which was granted, to officiate at marriages, something which is also regarded as proof of separatist tendencies in relation to the Lutheran National Church.

The mission association in Byske requests that the Board reprimands the preachers who "have taken the administration of the sacraments into their own hands" instead of referring to the ordinary church services, and at the same time the Board is requested to apply for an annulment of the right of its preachers to officiate at weddings so that the movement may once more find its proper place within the Lutheran National Church.

The answer from the Mission Board of the Society to this communication is being eagerly awaited as it will probably be determining for future developments.

Swedish Missionary Defends Racial Policy in South Africa.

It has caused wide attention in Sweden that a medical missionary from the Swedish Alliance Mission, Dr. Lars Vitus, in an interview in 'Morgon-Bladet' has defended the South African Government's racial policy. Dr. Vitus has worked as a physician in Transvaal for 10 years and is respected by all for his achievements.

"We missionaries feel that we do not want to set ourselves as judges over the policy adopted by the Government in the matter of race. The problems are simply gigantic", Dr. Vitus says, and he feels that in the name of justice it should also be mentioned what the Government does for the negroes. He points out that around Johannesburg whole new towns have grown up where the negroes may settle and that 40-50 million pounds have been spent during the past 4-5 years for the erection of such habitations. He further refers to the fact that the public annually spends some 6 million pounds on the school education of negro children. Dr. Vitus does not want to criticize the policy of 'apartheid', either, although he does dissociate himself from the contempt for the black people - to the extent to which it exists.

The well-known former missionary in South Africa, Gunnar Helander, who, time after time, has spoken strongly against the policy of the South African Government, promptly replied in an 'open letter' by pointing out the un-Christian spirit in the racial discrimination and asks Dr. Vitus whether he also feels that the German Confessional Church should have refrained from condemning the racial policy of the Nazis. Gunnar Helander emphasizes that it is the bounden duty of Christians to oppose the South African policy of race and segregation and that Dr. Vitus has no right to speak on behalf of the foreign mission, only on behalf of himself and perhaps of some of those who belong to his own society.

Dr. Vitus' statements are also being strongly opposed by other quarters. And it is characteristic that, quite contrary to them, the Swedish press, religious as well as secular, has greeted the efforts of the Mission Board for making possible the election of a negro as Bishop of the Swedish mission field in South Africa with definite approval (see CN No. 37).

New Protest Against the Hydrogen Bomb.

The Board of the Swedish free church community, Örebro Mission Association, has published a statement in which they join in the protests against the use of hydrogen bombs and also against their transportation across the continents in peace time as this must be regarded as a threat to world peace. The statement appeals for earnest prayers for the preservation of peace in the world.

